



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 20, 2003

Shana Jones, Special Assistant
Daryl Fields, Public Affairs Officer
610 N.W. Loop 410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
(210) 384-7452

**LEADER OF INTERNATIONAL COCAINE SMUGGLING OPERATION PLEADS
GUILTY TO MONEY LAUNDERING AND CONSPIRACY TO POSSESS WITH
INTENT TO DISTRIBUTE COCAINE - FACES UP TO 40 YEARS IN FEDERAL
PRISON**

(*Waco, Texas*) **United States Attorney Johnny Sutton** announced today that, **DAVID SALAZAR**, 44, Dallas, Texas, plead guilty to conspiracy to launder money and conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine. The defendant, SALAZAR, faces up to 20 years in prison for each count and up to a \$1,500,000 fine for the two offenses.

The defendant admitted that beginning as early as January 1, 1996, he was the leader of an organized crime and cocaine smuggling operation in the United States and Mexico. The cocaine was often shipped via the United States Postal Service to Manuel Ledezma¹, or to the residence of Salazar's ex-wife and children, Armandina Pena Salazar², Monica Salazar³ and Steve Salazar⁴, located in Dallas, Texas.

During the course of this conspiracy, DAVID SALAZAR, would distribute cocaine to his son, Steve Salazar and Micheal Bowens⁵, among others who would then further distribute the cocaine. Manuel Ledezma and Elizabeth Ledezma⁶ were used to collect and store money derived from the sale of the cocaine.

In order to facilitate this ongoing illegal enterprise, DAVID SALAZAR, would front the cocaine to his distributors who would eventually sell the cocaine and return the drug money collected back to SALAZAR who would then transport the illegally gotten currency to his suppliers in Mexico.

"Only a cooperative effort between local, state and federal law enforcement agencies can effectively fight this type of drug trafficking that is so pervasive along our border with Mexico," stated **U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton**. "I applaud the dedication and perseverance of law enforcement in investigating this case and bringing these drug smugglers to justice."

The U.S. government has seized the real and personal property of DAVID SALAZAR and his family that was either used in the drug smuggling operation or facilitated its operation. The government seized property includes cash, two residences located in Dallas, Texas, and three vehicles.

"David Salazar, the patriarch of the Salazar criminal organization, used his family, including his son and daughter, to facilitate the transportation of the narcotics and the money laundering

activities to hide the illegal proceeds from the sale of the narcotics” stated **Enrique Fasci, Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation.**

This case was prosecuted as an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation called Triad and was investigated by the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation Division, Drug Enforcement Administration, Dallas Texas Police Department and the Irving Texas Police Department. On behalf of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Texas, this case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jake Snyder.

#####

1. Manuel Ledema remains a federal fugitive.
2. Armandina “Nina” Pena Salazar plead guilty to conspiracy to commit money laundering and is serving an 18 month sentence in federal prison
3. Monica Salazar plead guilty to misprison of a felony and is serving a 15 month sentence in federal prison
4. Steve Salazar plead guilty to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine and money laundering and is serving a 108 month sentence in federal prison.
5. Michael Bowens plead guilty to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine and conspiracy to commit money laundering and is serving a 150 month prison term.
6. Elizabeth Ledezma plead guilty to money laundering and is serving a 72 month sentence in federal prison.

